

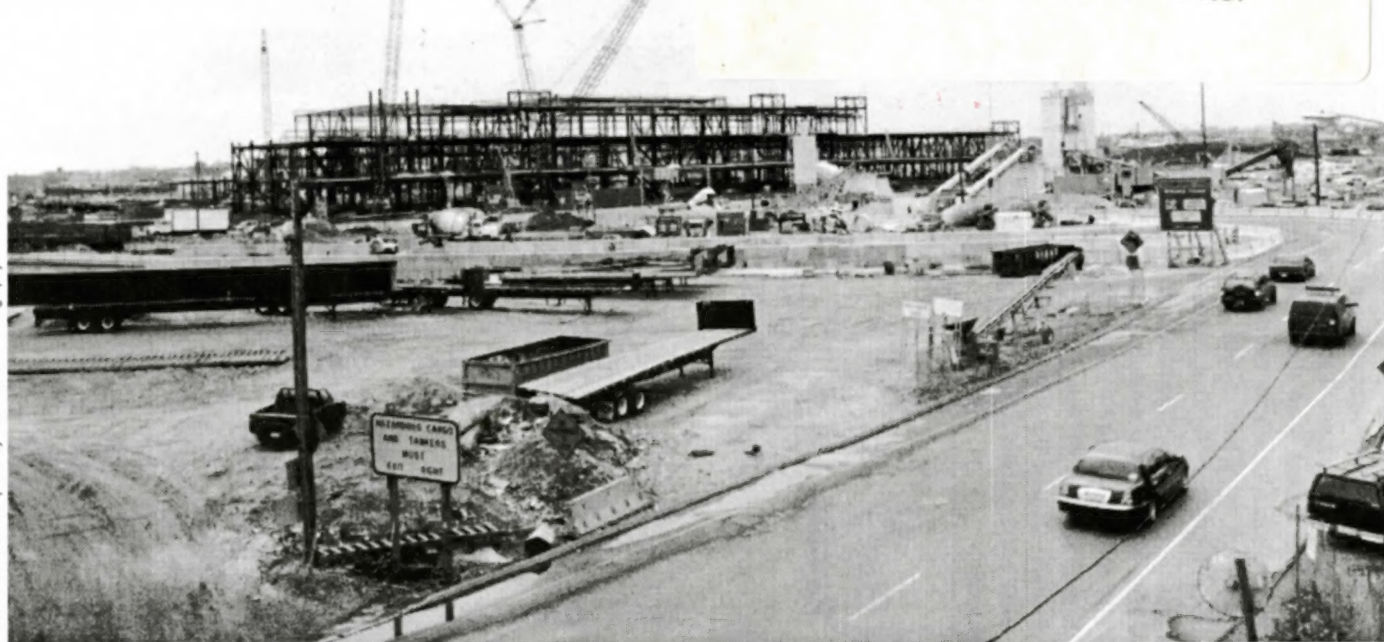
THE BOSTON INFORMER

No. 53

The newsletter for people who care about Boston

Winter 2001

Convention Center Rises

Library
Boston Architectural Center

The Boston Informer photo by Petr Mellicka Photography

It's happening, all right. Construction of the \$800 million Convention Center is proceeding apace. This despite cost overruns that forced a size reduction, the lack of financing for the convention center Starwood Hotel, unresolved issues surrounding transportation between the Convention Center and "mainland" Boston, and virtually no other development proceeding in the area. In the meantime, PricewaterhouseCoopers, commissioned by the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau last summer to study the demand for such a facility, has delayed its report even further to reexamine the present state of the economy and lack of financing for hotels. Many are asking whether the Convention Center or the report endorsing it will be finished first!

Ups and Downs in the Hotel Business — For years, securing financing for hotel construction has been difficult because of a national hotel overcapacity. In the current recession, it is almost impossible. In Boston, the only relatively certain new hotels are five now under construction: Congress Group Ventures' 272-room Embassy Suites Hotel in East Boston; Intercontinental's 190-room Nine Zero at 90 Tremont St.; Great Bay Holdings/Boston University, 150-room Hotel Commonwealth in Kenmore Square; the New Merrimac Development LLC 88-room Hotel Europa at 115 Merrimac St.; and Mark Hagopian's 33-room Charlesgate Hotel at 655 Boylston St.

Hotel projects approved by the City but not yet under construction include: Sawyer Enterprises' 395-room Loews Hotel at Stuart and Tremont streets; Saunders Hotel Group's 200-room hotel at 154 Berkeley St. (former Police Headquarters); Development Management Corp./Regent International Hotels' 198-room Battery Wharf hotel; National Development's 168-room extended-stay hotel at Charlestown's Tudor Wharf; Intercontinental's 130-room hotel at 1 Court St.; and David Leatherwood's 112-room hotel at 155 Portland St.

Unlikely to proceed soon are the Loews, Battery Wharf, and Tudor Wharf hotels. Other major hotels on indefinite hold are the Fan Pier 650-room hotel and Starwood 1,120-room Convention Center hotel. The status of NStar's 420-room hotel at 500 Atlantic Ave. at Central Artery vent building #3 (Boston Informer no. 51, June 2001) is uncertain.

Will the City meet the legislative mandate for 4,800 new hotel rooms in time for the Convention Center's 2004 opening? Probably not.

MBTA Blue Line Renovations — Despite announcing that Maverick station would not be renovated until 2004, the MBTA still maintains that it will start running six-car trains on the Blue line in 2003. The MBTA has ordered 94 new Blue Line cars for \$172 million from Siemens Transportation Systems.

Maverick, a heavily used station, was originally supposed to be completely modernized and renovated to make the station accessible to the elderly, handicapped, and baby carriages by 1997. The completion date was later changed to 2001 and recently to 2004 with only the platforms being lengthened to accommodate six-car trains instead of four-car trains. News of the change to Maverick and Orient Heights renovations schedules came at the Central Artery Environmental Oversight Committee meeting in October to the surprise of many given the extent of the planning and design efforts for the two stations.

The MBTA has also missed at Aquarium station when it failed to re-open an accessible Aquarium station in October. The MBTA, in return for closing Aquarium completely for one year and substituting buses, had promised to open the new headhouse west of the Central Artery. However, when the station opened October 29, no escalator was available from the street to the mezzanine (stairs and elevator only). To the dismay of the elderly and others less agile, the final headhouse design has only a single "up escalator" and no down escalator.

People Movers

Bob Kelly, from Vollmer to the BETA Group.

Gordon Slaney has retired from HNTB.

Doc Daley has retired as head of MBTA Bus Operations.

Jerry Schubel has retired as New England Aquarium president and CEO.

Edmund Toomey is the acting New England Aquarium president and CEO.

Terry Regan, formerly at CTPS, is now at The Planners Collaborative working at the Volpe Center.

Karen Arpino, formerly at MBTA Construction, is now at SEA Consultants.

Steven Pierce, from MassHousing to counsel to Acting Governor Swift.

Virginia Buckingham resigned as Massport executive director.

Robert Prince, former MBTA general manager, to DMJM Harris.

Howard Haywood, former head of MBTA Design and Construction, to DMJM Harris.

Susan Altshuler, from KKO Associates to head of MBTA Service Planning.

Margaret Dyson, from president of Historic Massachusetts advocacy organization, to director of Historic Parks for the Boston Parks and

1 Fleet Boston Pavilion – When this entertainment center was forced to move for the proposed construction of the Pritzker Fan Pier development in 1999, it was given a site on Wharf 8 on the South Boston Waterfront. One of the conditions for its relocation to Wharf 8 that it was only permitted to stay for five years, unless no suitable alternative site could be found.

Not surprisingly, a study of alternative sites commissioned by Clear Channel Entertainment Inc. of New York, the owners of Fleet Boston Pavilion, concluded that there are no suitable alternative sites. Stay tuned.

2 Liberty Place, Chinatown – A 1999 proposal for a hotel-office-retail development with a 16-story tower in Chinatown near Essex Street is finally moving ahead. The developers, 1025 Hancock Street Inc. (Kevin Fitzgerald, president) and Charles E. Smith Residential Realty Inc., filed a Notice of Project Change with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act office for the revised project, minus the hotel and office space.

The new proposal has 398 units of market-rate housing—average size, 875 s.f.—with 6,000 s.f. of retail space on the ground floor of the historic Royal Hotel on Washington Street and in the new construction. Most of the 490 parking spaces would be for residents with 135 spaces to replace the surface parking lot spaces eliminated by the project. The developers also propose to convert three historic buildings on Essex Street into approximately 20 units of affordable housing plus an additional 50 affordable units on Washington Street. The affordable housing will be conveyed to the Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center. The developers are seeking approval from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Construction is proposed to start in spring 2002 for occupancy in spring 2004.

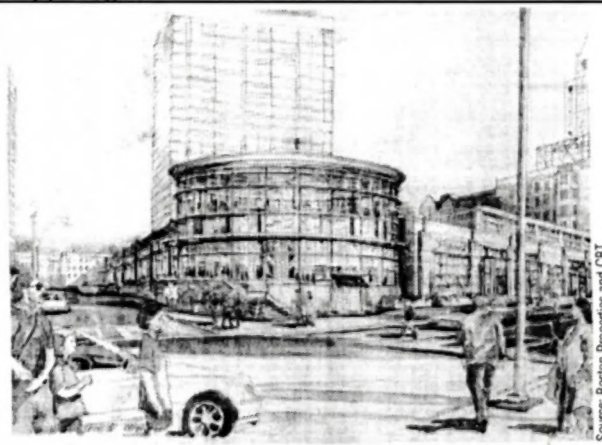
3 Congress Street Bridge – Bids to replace the Congress Street Bridge over the Fort Point Channel were due to be submitted by November 20, 2001. The estimated \$12.8 million project involves major upgrades to superstructure and piers.

4 Boston Common renovations – The new look on the Tremont Street side of the Boston Common is really an old look, restored by a new abutter. Last spring, Millennium Partners, developers of the Ritz-Carlton, Boston Common, and Avery Street luxury condominiums, gave the City \$1 million to improve the Boston Common. In addition to repairing walkways, signage and landscaping, the money was used to restore a portion of the historic wrought-iron fence along the Lafayette Mall. The original fence and double row of trees that created the first mall around the Common were destroyed by subway construction in 1897.

Millennium Partners with MDA of Boston are also developers of the residential development under construction in the Park Plaza area.

5 New Shaw's Supermarket, Back Bay – Groundbreaking for the first Shaw's Supermarket in Boston took place this fall. The new 60,000-sq. ft. food market is under construction at Huntington Avenue and East Ring Road at the Prudential Center. Off-street loading areas will be on Exeter Street, and parking for patrons will be available in the Prudential Center Garage. The store will replace the existing Star Market on Boylston Street and will be more than double in size.

A new office building, part of the Prudential Center Master Plan, will be located on the old Star Market site. The Shaw's Supermarket is expected to be complete in late 2002. Architect: CBT.



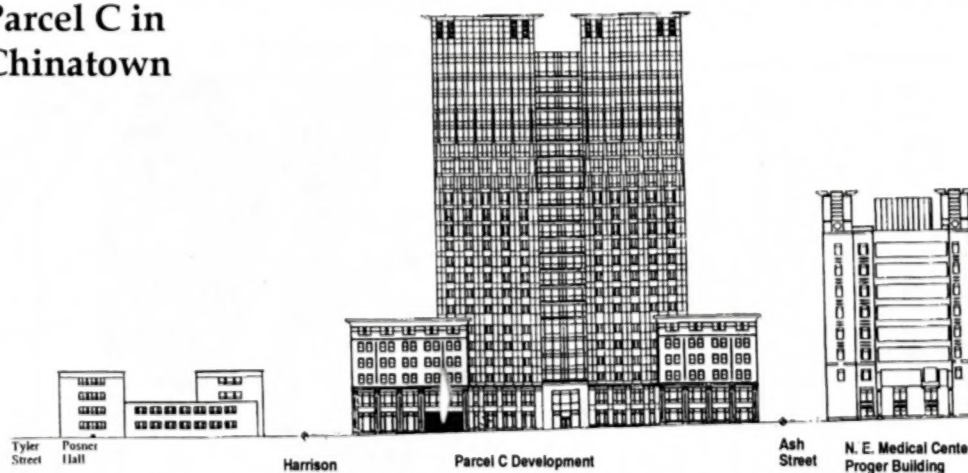
Columbus Center



Boston's promising Mass. Turnpike air rights development, Columbus Center at Columbus Avenue in the South End, has been changed significantly by the Winn/Cassin development team. The original plan with a 38-story tower has been replaced by a plan with reduced height and mass. A third parcel (#18) has also been added to the original two (#16 and #17).

The new plan features a 29-story tower on Parcel 16 with a 250-room hotel, 150 residential units and 200 parking spaces. Parcel 17 would have a 14-story building with 190-room hotel, 80 residential units, 80 parking spaces and a half-acre park. Parcel 18 would have a six-story building with a 600-car garage, 100 residential units and retail space. Construction could begin in 2002 and conclude in 2006. Architect: CBT.

Parcel C in Chinatown



Parcel C at Harrison Avenue and Oak Street in Chinatown, slated to be a large parking garage in the 1980s, will contain 251 rental units and condominiums on 23 floors. Community and retail space will be on the first two floors and parking for 285 cars will be below-grade. Despite being over 100 feet taller than adjacent buildings, the 240-foot-tall building has the support of many Chinatown residents because of the 46 affordable units, 34 middle-income condominiums and 35 low-income assisted-living units it will provide. Market-rate units will sell for \$300,000 to \$1.3 million.

The \$80 million project—"The Metropolitan"—is financed by a joint partnership between the Asian Community Development Corp. and Edward A. Fish Associates with support from several government agencies. Architect: The Architectural Team of Chelsea.

2002 Boston Informer Predictions!

Logan Airport: Massport will build Runway 14/32 at Logan Airport because of pressure to relieve Hanscom Airport of the growing business-jet traffic.



Public participation: The 50 or so people attending meetings on planning the Surface Artery will be forced to quit their jobs as meetings go on and on, 24 hours a day, seven days a week (unlike activities on the future parcels).

Democratic Convention: Democratic party leaders will come to Boston to see how the Walk-

ing City will work between the new South Boston Convention Center and Back Bay hotels. Nike is considering sponsoring a marathon from its Back Bay store to the World Trade Center.

I-90 Extension: The Turnpike (I-90) tunnel under the Fort Point Channel will incorporate car-ferries for the water transit portion.

Convention Center: The Convention Center Authority, in desperation, will sell raffle tickets to finance hotel construction in South Boston. The BRA will give blanket approval to any proposed hotel.

Central Artery costs: To end lawsuits and contention, Bechtel Corporation, Central Artery/Tunnel project management consultant, will buy the Mass. Turnpike Authority and offer to build a new ballpark for the new Red Sox owners on surface parcels 19, 21 and 22.

Central Artery: The Big Dig is awarded "on-time and on-budget" award from US Secretary of Transportation.



Central Artery surface: For lack of money, the open space above the depressed Central Artery will be covered with sand in keeping with the expected desert climate in Boston when global warming hits.

Security: Increased security at a number of agencies and offices result in fewer employees getting to their offices. Efficiency skyrockets.

Parking in Boston: City of Boston decides to limit the number of neighborhood parking permits it issues to the number of public parking spaces available. Scalpers salivate.

Toll booths: Toll booths will be incorporated into the underground Central Artery to pay for its ever-increasing costs.



Boston Journal



Because we care about Boston, The Boston Informer went in search of the "original" Boston in Lincolnshire, England (about 120 miles north of London), population approximately 32,000.

Boston became prosperous in the 12th century as a major exporter of wool and salt. In the 14th and 15th centuries a great church was built with a spire called the "Stump." This church was named after St. Botolph a seventh century Saxon monk who reportedly founded the town. The name Boston may come from a corruption of "Botolph's Town."



St. Botolph Church, England

In the 17th century, Boston was a strongly Puritan town. The persecution of Puritans under James I caused about 250 residents of the town—10 percent of the population—to emigrate to Massachusetts between 1630 and 1640 where they helped found the "new" Boston. Many of the emigres became leaders in government, education, culture and religion in the new Boston. Five men associated with Boston, England, went on to become governors of Massachusetts.



Town Bridge, Boston, England

Boston USA and Boston UK: Similarities

- Both are near the east coast of their countries, on a river leading to a large bay
- Both were the busiest ports in their countries at one time
- Both were Puritan religious strongholds in the 17th century
- Both took leading roles in revolts against the King of England
- Both were occupied by the King's troops sent to quell revolts
- Both had fens marshes that were turned into solid land
- Both were settled by waves of immigrants seeking liberty
- Both have had public markets for hundreds of years
- Both have Boston Colleges
- Both exported their dissidents

Boston USA and Boston UK: Differences

- Boston USA elects a powerful mayor every four years at great cost; Boston UK saves money by rotating the mayor's job every year among the town council members
- Boston UK has a council with duties and power; Boston USA does not.
- Boston USA has the Big Dig; Boston UK fortunately does not.
- Boston USA is the Hub of the Universe; Boston UK probably is not.
- Boston UK has a bigger church than Boston USA (but Boston USA has a bigger pipe organ).
- Boston UK is near the village of Fincham; Boston USA is the village of Fincham.

Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to *The Boston Informer*!

The Boston Informer is published by ATC Information, Inc., six times yearly in Boston, Massachusetts. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

The Boston Informer is available by mail only. \$25.00 per year (cheap!). Questions? Telephone (617) 723-7030, fax (617) 437-1886 or e-mail: 103477.556@compuserve.com.

Who needs toll booths...



An easy way to collect tolls to pay for the Big Dig on the stalled S. E. Expressway (in fairness to MassPike toll payers)!

What They're Saying

"The project [Central Artery/Tunnel] is in trouble. It's serious."

James Kerasiotes, former MassPike chair and Central Artery/Tunnel project director.

"Who's watching the cash register of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts? There's over \$1 billion at stake here while we fight over turf."

Jordan Levy, MassPike director, fired by Acting Governor Swift.

"Mr. Menn pointed out that in 1987, when the Golden Gate Bridge was opened to pedestrians..., the weight of thousands of pedestrians flattened the bridge by 10 feet. Similarly...thousands of Bostonians on foot could put more pressure on the new bridge than the cars and trucks it was designed to carry."

Christian Menn, Charles River Zakim Bridge designer, on a proposed pedestrian celebration on the bridge (quote courtesy WalkBoston).

"The bottom line in Boston right now: If it is not being built by a university, hospital or other institution, it is not getting built."

Boston Globe columnist Steve Bailey

"Why is the MBTA taking the position it is not obligated to rebuild Maverick and Orient Heights [stations] while saying you are going to do it anyway?"

Seth Kaplan, Conservati on Law Foundation, to the MBTA's Mike Mulhern at an Environmental Oversight Committee meeting.

"The bottom line is the kind of facility now planned is like starting a typewriter business in 2001. We're chasing a market that's disappearing."

Charles Chieppo, Pioneer Institue director, on the new Boston Convention Center under construction.

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A publication of ATC Information, Inc.

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TIME TO RENEW



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